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CERAMICS

DELFT FAÏENCE.



LITTLE is generally known about the beautiful faïence of Delft, even by amateurs who make artistic pottery a study; and some recent publications, so excellent in many respects, as Miss Young's "Ceramic Art" for instance, supply only the most scanty information on the subject. This is strange, inasmuch as the ware of Delft can claim, perhaps, preëminence over all other European faïences for the fineness of its paste, its vividness of color, whiteness of enamel, sonority and delicacy of touch.

Delft is a city in Holland, founded by Gobert "le Bossu," Duke of Lower Lorraine, who conquered the country in 1089. It is full of historical souvenirs which must awaken the most contrasting reflections in the mind of the tourist. On the walls of the "Prinsenhof" are still to be seen the marks of the bullets which sent William the Silent to his death; there are the busy and noisy docks with their forests of shipping, and there, also—what is more interesting to the art amateur—are the many houses of the great china decorators who have made the city famous. In 1515 Delft was the most populous town in Holland, but the number of its inhabitants is now reduced to 20,000. About the close of the seventeenth century it had no less than forty-three factories of faïence, and there was hardly a house in or around the city which was not externally decorated with home-made plaques and internally overcrowded with pottery of the same ware. The art amateur experiences, however, a great disappointment in wandering about the town and finding that of all of these factories, nothing remains but a sign on the door of a shabby house; some ruins of a factory formerly called "The Porcelain Bottle," and an aged potter, a stray being, as it were, in a strange world. His surprise, too, is increased at this total absence of souvenirs of the potter's industry when he is informed that it was no longer ago than 1850 that the last baking furnace ceased to blaze. The Delft faïence, although much in use, seems to have been appreciated hardly anywhere before that time. In none of the celebrated china collec-

name, he "aroused more surprise than enthusiasm." Up to last year when Henry Havard published his "Histoire de la Faïence de Delft," the information which the world possessed about this kind of pottery was most incomplete and erroneous; even recent books on the subject helping to perpetuate former misconceptions.

The date of the first manufacture of Delft ware is unknown. Hadyn, in his "Dictionary of Dates," fixes the year as 1310, and Miss Young, in her "Ceramic Art," has adopted the same date. Demmin, in his "Manual of the Lover of Porcelain," puts it at between the years 1450 and 1515. Mistaking ordinal numbers for dates, Mr. Demmin believed he had seen pieces of Delft bearing

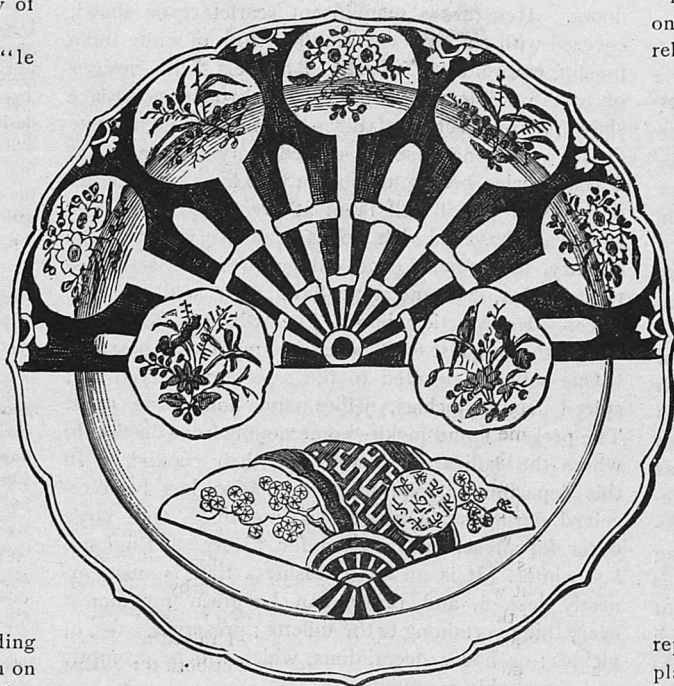


Fig. 1.—IMITATION OF JAPANESE WARE IN BLUE CAMAÏEU. IN THE COLLECTION OF PAUL GARNAUT, PARIS.

the mark of 1450, and—on what authority we know not—he says that in 1580 Delft was already known by the English as "the parent of pottery." By the evidence of documents, however, from which there is no appeal, Monsieur Havard shows that the date cannot have been earlier than 1600, and that all previous reckonings have no foundation in fact. Herman Pieterz, a name wholly unknown in modern times until recently, was the promoter of the ceramic industry at Delft; and in future histories of ceramics he will take his proper rank among the best of the china painters of Europe. The student of pottery is undoubtedly familiar with some specimen of those curious faïences bearing French inscriptions and decorated with types taken from French comedies and popular traditions, which Jacquemart, as Rieucreux before him, attributed to Claude Révérend and supposed were productions of a factory established at Paris in accordance with the letters patent granted to that artist by Louis XIV, April 21, 1664. It is now proved beyond a doubt that these faïences are not French, but real Delft, and chiefly the work of Aegestyn Reygens, who opened a factory at Delft in 1663.

The first potters who settled at Delft were Germans, and their flower, fruit, and leaf decoration recall the style of the Nürnberg artists.

The faïences of Delft ought not to be classed as high as some enthusiasts would place them, and assuredly not as low as the prejudice and ignorance of others would rank them. The old Italian faïences are inferior to them in form, but for beauty of decoration they have hardly ever been excelled. And, if from the realm of pure æsthetics we descend to the domain of æsthetics applied to industry, the scale turns in favor of Delft. The artists of that industrial center may have had rivals at Rouen and Nevers, at Dresden and Urbino in regard to other qualities; but their works were surpassed by none in variety and excellence of form, of style of decoration,

and whiteness of enamel. We have seen specimens of Delft designed in hatching, a style of drawing which it seems impossible to produce on dry paste. Hatching is the manner of shading by straight or curved lines crossing each other. From the factories of Delft there have been issued imitations of Japanese and Chinese ware in blue and white, such as will stand comparison with the best of the Eastern originals. An excellent example is afforded in our illustration, Fig. 1, of a plate in blue camaïeu from the collection of Mons. Garnaut of Paris. Camaïeu decoration consists in modeling in slight relief on the surface of the clay and then covering the piece with a colored transparent glaze. "When this runs," says Mr. Frédéric Vors, in his recent little book, "Bibelots and Curios," "it naturally runs thickest in the deepest hollows, and on cooling produces charming graded tints from the high reliefs, from which it seems to have been wiped off, to the lower parts which appear in deep shadow."

It is called camaïeu from its cameo-like effects. Figures 2 and 3, also specimens of blue camaïeu, are good examples of that fancy and arabesque decoration which is best suited to the purposes of china ornamentation, and which we strongly recommend above all other styles to the art amateur, who should bear in mind that, however beautifully executed, landscapes, figures, and, to an extent, flowers, are out of place on plates, soup-tureens, and other dinner-table articles.

The beautiful polychromatic decorations of the artists of Delft, of which we furnish characteristic illustrations, must not be overlooked. They have all the glow and grace peculiar to the Japanese, combined with the charm of design of the finest Persian and Rouen wares. Figures 4 and 5 are good examples of polychromatic Delft, but, of course, much of the beauty of effect of the originals is lost in their reproduction in black and white. The landscape plaques, with figures by Jean Asselyn, are perhaps the most highly-finished things of their kind; though far more vigorous, they remind one of the faïences of to-day by Pinard, who sells his plates for as much as \$120 apiece. The animals painted in polychromatic colors by Pier Viseer, about the middle of the eighteenth century, were all painted "sur cru" (before firing) or, more properly speaking, after the piece has come out of the bath containing the glaze. Great care is needed for this method of decoration (which is called by the French, "émaux au grand feu"); hence the high prices such pieces command. The surface of the glaze being rough and gritty, the even distribution of color calls for the exercise

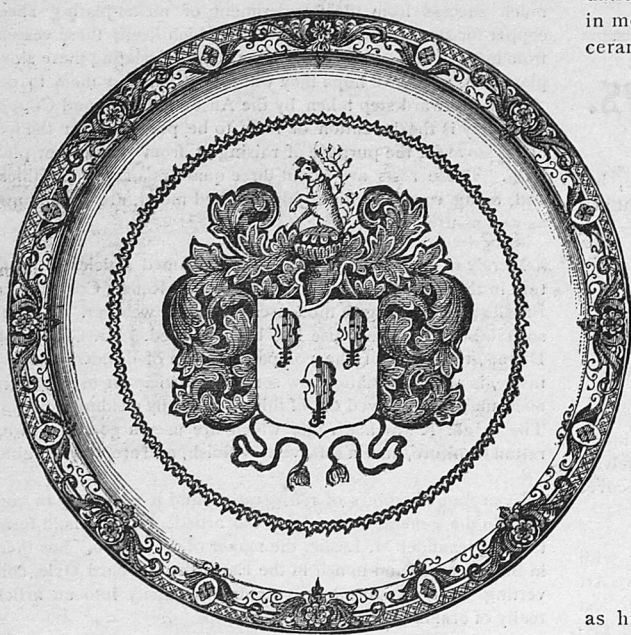


Fig. 2.—"GRAND PLAT" DECORATED IN BLUE CAMAÏEU. IN THE COLLECTION OF PAUL GARNAUT, PARIS.

tions of Europe, such as the Sommerard and the Sauvageot, was there to be found any specimens of the ware. The Hollanders themselves, seemingly, were unaware of the value of the artistic treasures in their possession. Jacquemart says that, in a journey he made in 1852 through the country, he failed to find a single collection of Delft, and that whenever he happened to mention the



Fig. 3.—PLATE DECORATED IN BLUE CAMAÏEU. IN THE MUSÉE DE CLUNY.

of unusual skill; the color, once applied, cannot be removed, and consequently no false touch of the brush can be corrected; the colors are apt to run and spread and mix, when the piece is passed through the intense heat required to vitrify the glaze; and, finally, the range of metallic colors that can stand the high temperature to which the process of vitrifying the glaze necessarily ex-

poses them, is very limited, and the effect is accordingly obtainable only with great difficulty. The durability of this kind of decoration, however, is incomparably superior to all others. Pier Viseer was such a master in this kind of work, that he may be said to have been without a rival. The Bible has furnished an infinite number of subjects to the artists of Delft, who have also produced a charming variety of marine and landscape designs. A fine specimen of the two latter combined is afforded by the soup-tureen shown in our illustration, Fig. 6, which comes from the collection of M. John F. Loudon, at The Hague. Van de Meer, Berghem, and William Van de Velde, also acquired a great reputation in this field.

Delft ware is easily distinguished from any other kind of pottery, and even from good imitations of its own kind by its lightness and sonority. Old specimens of the faïence are very scarce, and their price has increased a hundred-fold within the last twenty years. It will be noticed that the lower surface of the white enamel with which they are coated, in many cases shows irregularities in the form of worm-holes, as though the grease of the clay, or some air bubble, had at certain points interfered with the enamel's evenly adhering to the plate. MAURICE MAURIS.

OUR PLAQUE DESIGN.

THE original design for a plaque, which we give in Plate II. of our supplement, may be done in one firing by the experienced china-painter; but the student had better do it in two firings. The head and throat of the birds may be capucine red ("rouge capucine"); the breasts white of the plate, shaded with ivory black ("noir d'ivoire"); the back and tail feathers dark brown ("brun rouge riche"); the feet gray. The foreground foliage should be grass green ("vert No. 5 pré") shaded with dark brown, according to the design. Paint the right-hand foliage orange yellow ("orange jaune"); it may be shaded with grass-green or brown. The twigs are dark brown.

Paint the butterfly capucine red and ivory black, according to the shading of the design. For the first firing, lay in your background, beginning with cobalt blue for the sky and softening it down with ivory yellow to produce the effect of sunrise. Then paint in the mountains in light purple (carmine and blue), dissolving into apple green ("vert de pomme") for the distant foliage. Use for the right-hand foliage orange yellow, shading it with green as indicated already, and continue with the green for the rest of the foliage. Then do the red parts of the picture, and complete for the first firing, with the brown for the birds, the twigs and shading of parts of the foliage. The color should all be laid on lightly. The use of the ivory black (thinned for gray) for the shading of the bird's breast and feet, and strong for parts of the butterfly and the more defined hues in the plumage and the foliage, will complete the picture, which is now ready for the second firing.

A Japanese design of birds is also given in Plate II. It is especially suitable for a tile, but may be used for a variety of decoration purposes.

THE LATEST PORCELAIN FASHION.

THE latest fashion in cups and saucers and plates is the revival of the curious ware known to our grandfathers as



FIG. 4.—TEAPOT, POLYCHROME DECORATION. IN THE COLLECTION OF COLEUT JOURDE, PARIS.

"Chelsea-Derby" and "Crown Derby." The paste is fine and compact, the glaze even and clear, the color brilliant and well balanced, and when applied by hand it is done with skill and care. For a time the Derby factory remained closed, and it is only a few years ago that the revival of the taste for ceramics caused the works to be reopened, and they stand to-day as high as any of the more ambitious factories.

The reputation of the Derby craftsmen in the shops of England was at one time so great, that it led to the saying among potters that "a Derby man has an extra wheel." The Derby China manufacture was founded by William Duesbury in about 1755. He had been brought

up in Staffordshire and was probably attracted to Derby, which was then doing a good silk trade, by the quantity of coarse clays and coal that were to be found in the neighborhood. In the latter half of the eighteenth century—at the time of the establishment of the English manufactures of porcelain—it had become a profitable trade, and was carried on in nearly all the art centres of Europe. The Meissen factory in Germany, under the patronage of the king of Saxony and that of Vienna, under Theresa and the Emperor Joseph; the Furstenburg and the Nymphenburg factories, patronized by Maximilian Joseph; Florence, and near it Doccia in northern Italy; Naples, with the Capodi Monte China, under Charles III.; St. Cloud, Vincennes, Chantilly, in which Louis XV. took interest, and many



FIG. 5.—BOTTLE, POLYCHROME DECORATION.

others were producing works of well-deserved reputation. At that time Chelsea and Bow furnished wares of artistic value, but they soon discontinued. Duesbury bought the plant at both places, and some of the best hands were transferred to Derby with the best of the moulds and models. This was in 1770, or shortly afterwards. The Chelsea works continued for some time longer—ten years about—but were ultimately removed to Derby. This accounts for the name often used of Chelsea-Derby ware.

Long before his death, Duesbury had raised the Derby China to such a degree of excellence, that both for quality and artistic decoration it was equal to anything of the kind produced at that time in England. Among its patron the works counted not only the nobility but royalty, for numerous orders were given by George III. and Queen Charlotte at an early period of their reign. The king paid the manufactory a visit in 1773, and since then the crown has been added to the factory mark, and the ware called "Crown" Derby.

William Duesbury died in 1786. His son, also named William, was his successor. He had inherited his father's talents, and under his management the work of the factory reached its highest point of excellence. In consequence of ill health he took into partnership a Mr. Michael Kean—an artist of merit. The second Duesbury died in 1797, and as his son was only ten years old, Kean carried on the business for some time under the name of "Duesbury & Kean."

In 1809 the Derby China Factory was advertised for sale, and in 1811 became the property of Robert Bloor. But Bloor went too far; for he had all the lightly injured pieces—such occur in no small quantity in the first firing of porcelain—which had accumulated, decorated and sold at auction all over the United Kingdom. This robbed the ware of its previous prestige. In 1828 Mr. Robert Bloor became insane, and the factory dragged on till 1848, when it was finally closed.

FRÉDÉRIC VORS.

POTTERY DECORATION.

THE short time that painting on pottery has been practised in this country will warrant the most elementary remarks on this subject, so long as they may hint at methods not given in the different publications on china painting, or may help to simplify them.

Most of the writers confuse the pupil by troublesome details as to what to use and what to avoid, and dwell on the utter impossibility of any good being done without the strictest cleanliness. This latter is very well so far as

rose color, carmine, and other very delicate colors are concerned; but greens, browns, orange, and all colors necessary for foliage, stems, earth, etc., may be mixed and brought as near as possible, before burning, to the desired tint. Even reds where the French colors are used may be introduced amongst greens, etc., to give autumnal or faded tints.

The great want noticeable in pottery decoration is originality, and when this is shown there is generally a lack of simplicity. To decorate should be to improve.

Notice first the form of vase or other article, and let the ornament be suitable to its form. A flowing line should never be carried over angular forms. Large pieces should have bold, decided, and plain decoration; at the same time a lighter spray or ornament may entwine and give grace and richness to the work.

Let all pieces be painted, if possible, to suit the position they are to fill. A large plaque or vase, when wanted simply to give color in a retired corner, or to improve other surroundings, should be treated very simply; for elaborate work would destroy its object. Other pieces for nearer inspection should be done with the greatest care, equally in giving requisite detail and avoiding all finicalness. Cups and saucers and other articles coming immediately against the eye may receive more finish; but care must be taken that the effect of color when they are laid on the table is good. Strictly natural forms and colors in detail should not be introduced, as the appearance of relief is better avoided. Never forget that it is decoration of a flat, smooth surface, and pottery. A picture effect can more easily be gained in oil or water colors, and the risk in burning pottery unfits it for this branch of art.

Let the pupil, who is supposed to be able to draw, make as many studies from nature as possible, either in monochrome or colors, but in all cases give the peculiar characteristics of plant or flower, and notice the color of surroundings when they grow. A brilliant flower alone painted on a piece would be objectionable. Nature never is obtrusive in color or form. The most dazzling flowers are balanced by sombre stem. Deep or olive toned leaves and the earth from which they spring all tend to subdue and render the whole harmonious and beautiful.

Splendid effects in color are best gained by economy, and all waste is bad art.

The practice of copying from bad examples is most baneful. If the pupil will take a simple spray of leaves, natural; first get the "block" or general disposition; then the more accurate drawing, noticing well the joints and opening of leaves; then take his palette, which, it is to be hoped, is not too clean, and put in the local colors of stem and leaves; the simplicity of nature will be evident, especially in color, and will be in striking contrast with many of the works to be found in the various stores. After a little practice the pupil will be able to take almost any plant or flower, and no time should be lost in storing all memoranda and sketches for future reference. These will prove a source of profit, and will well repay the student for the time spent on them; to say nothing of the pleasure of making

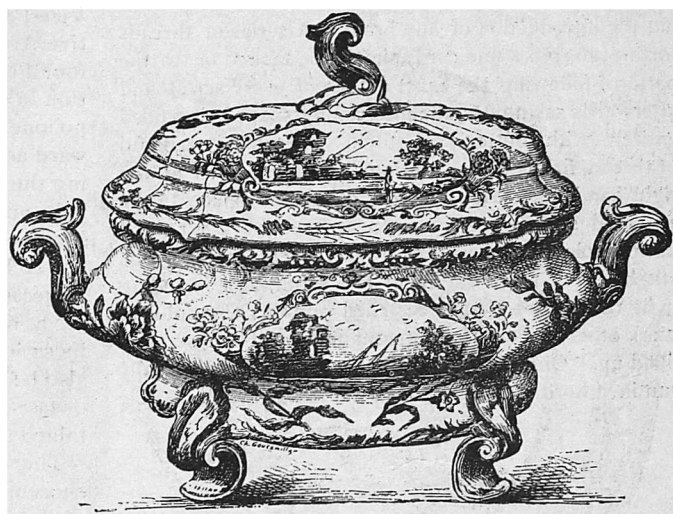


FIG. 6.—SOUP TUREEN IN POLYCHROME AND GILT. IN THE COLLECTION OF JOHN F. LOUDON.

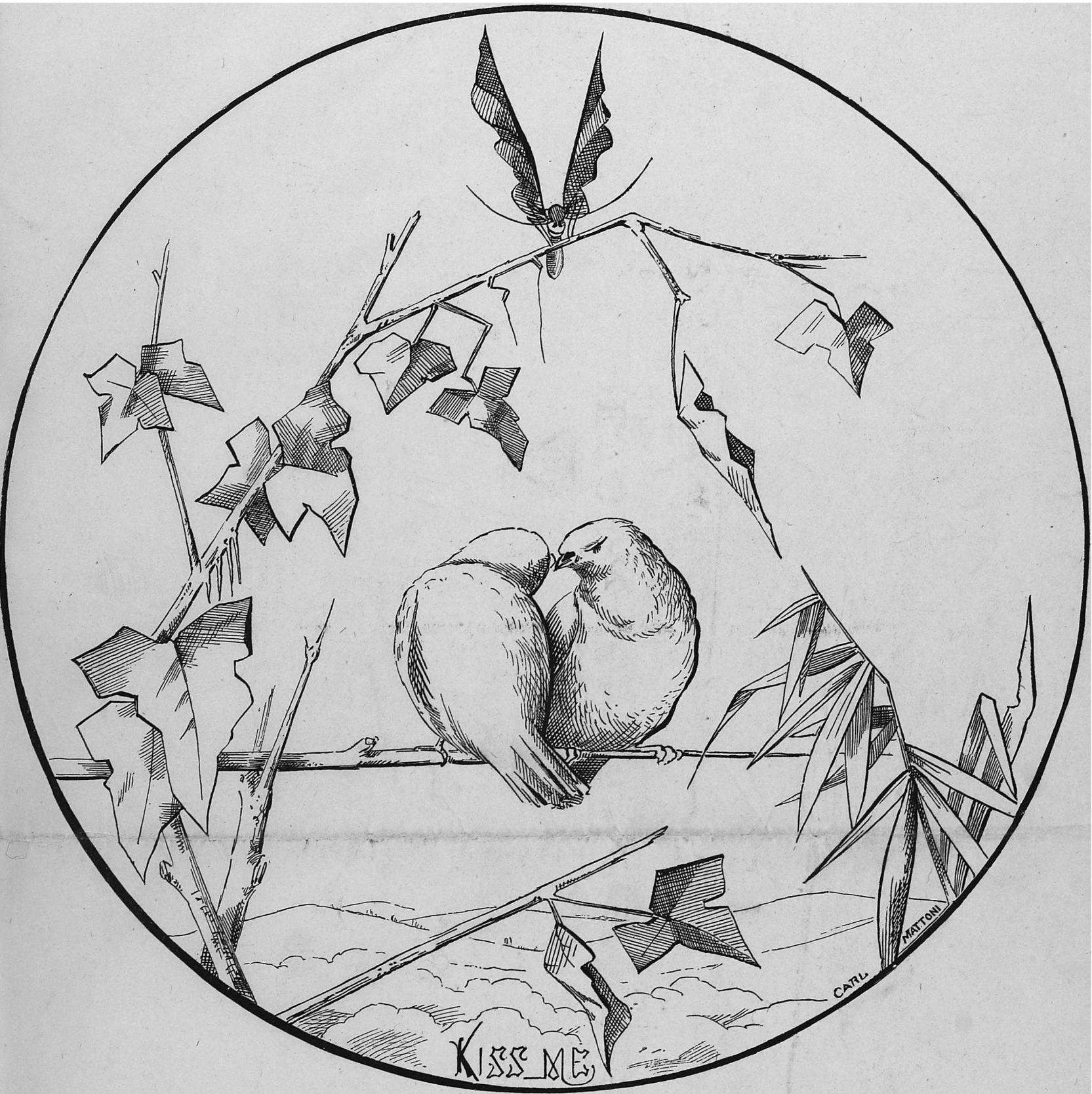
one's own designs, instead of pirating those of other persons—a practice unblushingly resorted to by so many.

In closing these remarks I would advise those who have ability and perseverance to practise much in one-color, so as to get thorough control of their brushes, especially of the larger ones; afterwards keep to low tones, getting effects with subtle coloring, not with positive color; avoid getting the work muddy by repeated painting, remembering all the time that they are enamels you are using, and will, mostly, burn out some little; and yet do not get the paints on too thickly, for beyond a certain strength, thickness does not deepen the tints, but produces bad results which are irremediable.

JOHN BENNETT.

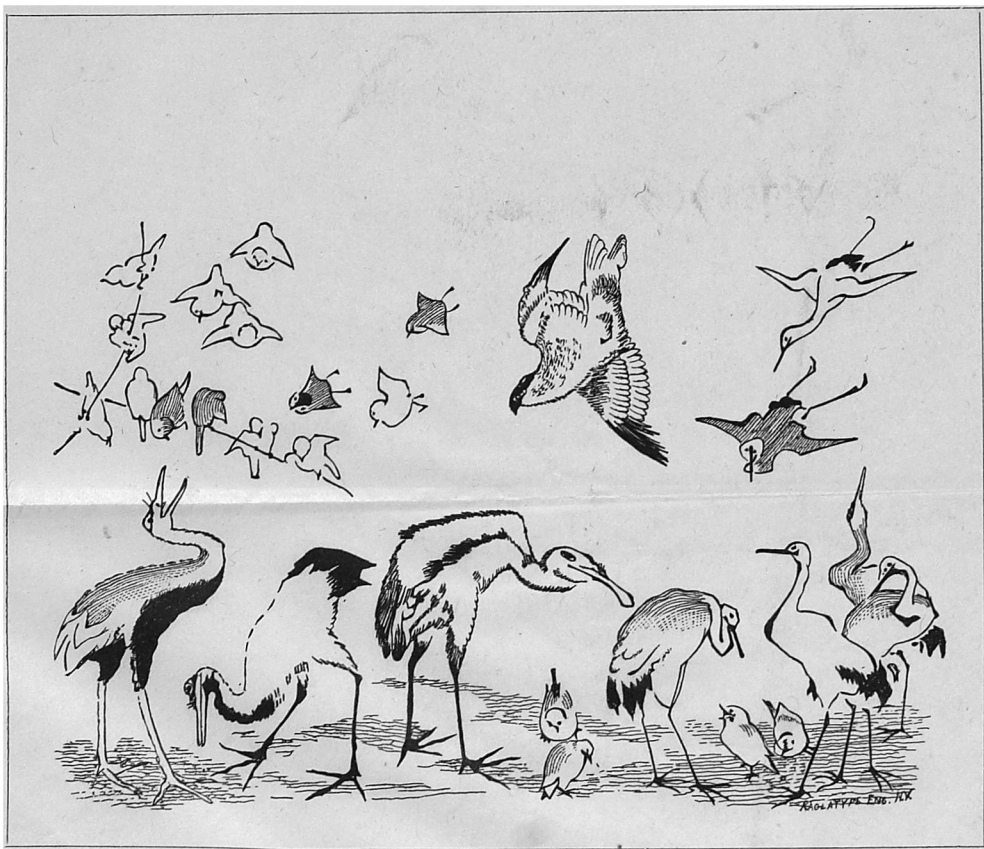
PLATE II.

[See Page 37.]



DESIGN FOR A PLACQUE.

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JAPANESE DESIGN FOR GENERAL DECORATION.

[See Page 37.]